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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LIBREVILLE 000539

SIPDIS

OES FOR ELEN SHAW, SPECIAL ENVOY TODD STERN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2014

TAGS: [TSPL](#) [SENV](#) [GB](#)

SUBJECT: GABON: PRESIDENT BONGO SAYS HE WILL FOCUS ON
COOPERATION IN COPENHAGEN

Classified By: Ambassador Eunice Reddick for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(c) Summary: In a December 4 meeting with the Ambassador, Gabon's President Ali Bongo Ondimba said he would promote a moderate, cooperative approach to finding solutions to the effects of climate change at the Copenhagen conference. Some African leaders are pressing for a &reparations8 fund from developed countries for their years of pollution, a position characterized by Bongo as &hardline.8 However, he supports the AU initiative to provide technology and capacity-building to Africa to mitigate the effects of climate change. President Bongo will join other Central African heads of state in Bangui December 13, where strategies for Copenhagen will be discussed along with other regional economic and financial issues under CEMAC. End Summary.

2.(c) In her first official meeting with Ali Bongo Ondimba following his October 16 investiture, the Ambassador raised several bilateral and regional issues, including the Bilateral Investment Treaty, trafficking in persons, conflicts in Africa, and Gabon in the UN Security Council (septel). This cable focuses on the discussion of President Bongo's strategy and expectations for the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen.

3.(c) President Bongo spoke at length about the Copenhagen conference. He said the discussions are important for Africa, and the Congo Basin forest countries must promote themselves as &part of the solution.8 He said there are countries, notably in West Africa in the Sahel, that are taking a hard line on the issue of &reparations8 from developed countries. Gabon and its Congo Basin neighbors are not in the same category as the hard liners, Bongo noted, and should take a constructive and cooperative approach to developing alternative, clean energies. He alluded to concerns, however, about some (unnamed) Central African leaders who talk about &burning8 their forests to force the hand of developed countries. The President spun this scenario out to a situation that would be catastrophic in terms of the threat to peace and security.

4.(c) Bongo welcomed the participation of President Obama in Copenhagen, and the progress achieved with China and Brazil. He said the greatest fear among African leaders is that they will leave Copenhagen with no commitment from the developed countries to control their carbon emissions and assist developing countries deal with the impact of global warming. He pointed out there is no longer any question about the impact of global warming; now the effect is measureable. Using similar technology, the impact of preserving forests is also measureable. It is a &common good8 of the world. He added that his recent mid-November discussions in London focused on Prince Charles, project to save tropical rainforests and the International Working Group on financing reduction of greenhouse effect on tropical forests.

5.(c) The President said that Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi will speak on behalf of the Africa group in

Copenhagen. The PM will base his remarks on the African Union initiative to provide capacity building and technology to Africa to overcome the effects of climate change. AU Commission Chairperson (and former Gabon foreign minister) Jean Ping is working closely with PM Meles on the Africa position for Copenhagen. However, to ensure that Gabon,s interests are presented, President Bongo intends to speak as a &respondent8 to PM Meles. Bongo said the Central African heads of state will have an opportunity to coordinate their position at the meeting of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) in Bangui on December 13.

(Note: Interestingly, Bongo had little to say when asked about the invitation from President Sarkozy to Congo Basin heads of state to meet December 16 in Paris to discuss Copenhagen. His comment was limited to noting that Sarkozy, who he recently met in Paris, is feeling neglected by Washington.)

6.(c) Comment: President Bongo has made the Copenhagen conference a priority as an initial step of the &Green Gabon8 pillar of his &Emerging Gabon8 policy. He would like to make Gabon a model for environmental protection, and hopes to make forest protection and sustainable development of natural resources a &win-win8 for Gabon, an expression he uses frequently. The President expects to be an active participant in Copenhagen and is gathering information on the climate change strategies of Gabon,s partners. Following the Ambassador,s meeting at the Presidency, the President called in Japan,s ambassador to discuss Tokyo,s Copenhagen strategy. He also met with China,s envoy. For the local audience, Gabon,s RTG1 devoted more than an hour to broadcasting a press conference led by Gabon,s chief Copenhagen negotiator to explain what,s at stake at the

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climate change talks. Embassy is sharing with Gabonese officials the latest information on the U.S. position, including the emerging consensus on the fund for developing countries.

REDDICK